

king? For what was Ezra ashamed? Read the last part of v. 22. He had staked God's strength and mercy against all odds. Is it safe to do so? (Have the marginal references here read: they are lamps.)

So they fasted and prayed. "Prayer and provender hinder no man's journey" is an old and true proverb. How is it that the man who prays is safer, stronger, richer, than the man who shuts God out of his thought and life? Did Ezra know that his prayer was answered? v. 12. How many prayers does God answer?

Now let the class read "verse about," or together, vs. 24-29. See who can write down or say out the greatest number of points. Here are some: (a) The very best in the land are not too good for the Lord's work. (b) Good leaders are likely to win great successes. (c) A good deal of God's work is best done by a few persons working to one common end. (We call them committees.) (d) Church money, indeed, trust funds of any sort, cannot be too carefully counted and cared for. (e) God must have been with His people when the hearts of "the king, and his counsellors, and his lords" were so warm to them. (See v. 22, and compare Prov. 16:7.) There will be some talk about money in bars and in coin, about weighing as against counting, and about the

different sorts of the precious metals and vessels, and the number and value of them. Two things will be specially marked: the great value, almost \$5,000,000, and the scrupulously exact count taken and given. We cannot be too business-like in the Lord's work.

Why were they so scrupulous? v. 28. What is meant by "holy" here? Yes, "consecrated, set apart." How long was the charge to continue? v. 29. The very stones of Jerusalem would blister the feet of those who had proven unfaithful to their trust. They were to keep charge, as remembering that the journey would end, and that only through their fidelity to God and to their trust would it end well. A picture of our earthly life and the giving of account at its close.

How did those asked to undertake these heavy responsibilities act? v. 30. As every true servant of God rejoices to act—hearty accepting their share of the Lord's work.

What was the story of the march? V. 31 tells it. Take it up step by step. Note that the task was finished. The Golden Text is the key to it all. Ten miles a day would give plenty of time for song. What were some of the songs? Perhaps Ps. 23, or Ps. 121, or Ps. 122. Duty heartily undertaken attunes for song, and the song of trust lightens the weary way.

ADDED HINTS AND HELPS

In this section will be found further assistance under various headings.

Lesson Points

With God as our guide we can never go astray. v. 21.

Whatever the means we use in His work, the might is of God. v. 22.

Prayer is the key to unlock heaven's supply for human need. v. 23.

Those seldom lack something to do who can do something. vs. 24, 25.

There is more danger of our being too exacting in our demands than of being too exact in our duties. vs. 26, 27.

Purity is power. v. 28.

Our tasks should not be forsaken till they are finished. v. 29.

The most capable leader can accomplish little without willing followers. v. 30.

God's hand is a surer defence than the army of soldiers. v. 31.

A journey begun with God is certain to have a happy end. v. 32.

From the Library

If the community of the Lord was not to lose its individuality and disappear among the surrounding peoples, and the precious treasures which it contained not to be lost to mankind, two things were imperatively necessary: first, a reinforcement to the numbers and spirit of the strict and faithful party; and secondly, the imposition of a new law of worship and life, which would create and continue to express a sharp distinction between the people and all around them.—A. B. Davidson.

We must be struck with his (Ezra's) splen-